



National  
Guidance

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## Learning Outside and Off-site visits: self-evaluation using the Ofsted framework

The 2008 Ofsted report 'Learning outside the classroom: How far should you go?' recognised the benefits of Learning Outside. It reported on education taking place in the school grounds and local area, extending to residential experience. It considered the impact of such activities across the Key Stages, during the school day, out of school hours, and during school holidays. It found that:

*All of the schools and colleges surveyed provided exciting, direct and relevant learning activities outside the classroom. Such hands-on activities led to improved outcomes for pupils and students, including better achievement, standards, motivation, personal development and behaviour. The survey also found examples of the positive effects of learning outside the classroom on young people who were hard to motivate.*

And

*Learning outside was most successful when it was an integral element of long-term curriculum planning and closely linked to classroom activities.*

### Self-evaluation

Schools should know that anything that they do is effective and impacts on children and young people.

The following three key questions underpin the self-evaluation of Learning Outside (including Off-site Visits):

- **Why** is Learning Outside integral to the educational provision of the school?
- **How** successfully is it embedded in the curriculum and the school's ethos?
- **What** impact does Learning Outside have on pupils' learning and personal development?

In the document *School inspection handbook*, Ofsted explains that self-evaluation is intended to help schools to assess how well they are doing against the core areas set out in legislation. Ofsted do not want schools preparing solely for inspection purposes, but the following headings and questions, which correspond

to the Ofsted handbook, will help schools to review and evaluate the effectiveness of their Learning Outside provision.

## Overall effectiveness - Summary

1. Has Learning Outside been co-ordinated within each year and across the Key Stages to provide integration, progression, inclusiveness, equity and balance? (How effectively?)
2. Is there evidence supporting Learning Outside being fully integrated into school systems (This may include: recruitment/job descriptions; performance management; professional development; policies where Learning Outside is a consistent theme; and the curriculum map.) (What evidence?)
3. Does Learning Outside promote learning, stimulate interest, generate enthusiasm and understanding, and help to develop positive attitudes and resilience? (Examples?)
4. Are pupils involved in decisions about risk and their safety so that they learn how to look after themselves and others and understand the consequences of their behaviour and actions? (In what ways?)
5. Is there evidence that planning for Learning Outside and visits follows good practice and approval complies with the employer's requirements? (What evidence?)
6. Does Learning Outside contribute to provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development? (What examples?)
7. Does Learning Outside support the nurturing of the character and the confidence of pupils to engage positively with others and the local community? (In what ways?)
8. Does the establishment ensure that Learning Outside meets the needs of all pupils including those with a disability and pupils with SEN. (Evidence? Reflected in the establishment equality policy?)
9. Has Pupil Premium funding been used to support Learning Outside and are there examples of the difference it has made to the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils? (What examples?)
10. Do the school's policies for safeguarding integrate with Learning Outside?

## Effectiveness of leadership and management

The educational vision and ambition of the establishment are driven by the leadership and they are commonly reflected within its ethos. As well as academic achievement, the ethos often refers to wider 'whole person' development and the confidence of pupils to engage positively with others and the community.

1. Is Learning Outside a whole school approach to learning for leaders at all levels?
2. In what ways do leaders manage, monitor and ensure that Learning Outside is developed in the school's strategic and particularly, curriculum plans?
3. How does leadership engage the school community, including parents and carers in Learning Outside as a distinctive, broad, balanced, experience?

4. What information about Learning Outside is evaluated and how do leaders at all levels use that information?
5. Can leaders at all levels identify the difference that Learning Outside makes to pupils?
6. In managing information, how accessible is information about outcomes for pupils entitled to Pupil Premium?
7. In communications - including the establishment's website - how effectively is the place of Learning Outside explained?
8. In what ways are the experiences of pupils and the views of parents about Learning Outside explored in consultations and surveys? (Are the findings readily available?)
9. In the management of resources, has there been an audit of the area local to the school to identify Learning Outside opportunities? If so, how well is this audit shared and used?
10. Where staff lead specific activities outdoors, do they have the necessary level of skill, and/or qualification?
11. What is the role of the EVC in integrating Learning Outside and visits into the curriculum? Is this role developed through performance management?
12. Do leaders at all levels fully understand and comply with policies for safeguarding where they apply to outdoor learning?

## Governance

1. How does teaching and Learning Outside contribute to the ethos and the educational provision of the school?
2. What examples are there of where Governors have sought information or challenged to establish clarity about the benefits and outcomes of teaching and Learning Outside?
3. What do Governors understand of the difference that Learning Outside makes to pupils' learning, their personal development, and school effectiveness?
4. What recognition do Governors give to the importance of whole school planning for Learning Outside so that the curriculum:
  - Has suitable breadth, depth and relevance?
  - Is exciting and motivational to its learners?
  - Meets the needs of all pupils?
5. Where Pupil Premium is used for Learning Outside, how do Governors evaluate any differences made to the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils by these experiences and ensure that it provides equality of opportunity to those entitled to the grant?
6. How effectively do Governors hold leadership and management to account for the impact of Learning Outside?

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

1. Do teachers actively consider Learning Outside as a means for pupils to develop skills and understanding?

2. How does assessment and evaluation inform future planning for teaching and Learning Outside?
3. Is the quality of teaching and learning outside (including visits) evaluated for impact on pupils' learning, including the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities?
4. What examples are there of Learning Outside that has provided pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop basic skills of English, Maths and Communication?
5. How has Learning Outside provided pupils with appropriate levels of challenge and given them opportunities to increase their understanding of risk?
6. Does teacher and other adult dialogue during Learning Outside demonstrate awareness of where extra help and encouragement is needed and provide feedback on how the group and individuals are progressing?
7. What examples are there of use of imagination and creativity in learning outside?
8. In what ways are conversations with pupils, surveys of their perceptions and the views of staff and parents about the school and the quality of teaching and learning outside, taken into account?

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

1. When considering the personal development, behaviour and wellbeing of pupils, to what extent does Learning Outside contribute to:
  - Enjoying their education as confident motivated learners, proud of their achievements?
  - Forming good relationships?
  - Being well prepared to respect others?
2. What examples are there where:
  - Learning Outside has developed mutual respect and tolerance of others?
  - Children and young people have worked positively together through Learning Outside experiences?
  - There has been an opportunity to reflect on experiences and understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others?
  - Learning Outside has involved appreciation of artistic, musical and cultural opportunities?
  - Pupils' experiences of Learning Outside have made a positive difference to behaviour and attitudes and this has made a difference to trends of improvement and attendance?
  - Learning Outside has contributed towards pupils' moral, social and cultural development and their physical well-being, enabling them to thrive?
  - When schools deliver specific outdoor activities pupils make strong progress?

## Outcomes for pupils

1. Which groups of pupils and individuals, including SEND and the most able, have raised their achievement through teaching and Learning Outside?
2. In what ways is this evidenced?
3. What examples are there of work that show pupils' improvement through teaching and Learning Outside?
4. Do pupils:
  - Feel able to talk about their engagement in the learning?
  - Engage as curious, interested learners?
  - Benefit from the challenge of Learning Outside?
5. To what extent does the integration of Learning Outside in the curriculum contribute to the progress of English and Maths?

## Some helpful background and resources

The '*Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto*' launched in 2006 gave prominence to the benefits of Learning Outside. Other documents, including '*Time for change*', '*Raising achievement through the environment*' and '*Learning Away*' further support those benefits. You can find these documents (2.4e – 2.4g) in this guidance.

The Learning Outside the Classroom Mark is an accreditation scheme for schools that recognises and supports the development of learning outside the classroom across all subject areas (<http://www.lotc.org.uk/lotc-accreditations/lotc-mark/>)

The English Outdoor Council publication '*High Quality Outdoor Learning*' outlines the benefits of working in outdoor contexts and has been written to help evaluate, and set about improving, the quality of Outdoor Learning. In support of this, it identifies ten key outcomes of Outdoor Learning with a range of indicators attributed to each one. It is document 2.4i in this guidance.

A booklet to help schools in the process of embedding outdoor learning in their regular practice has also been published (<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/oelres-net/transforming>). This is available in electronic form or hard copies can be requested by emailing [oelresnet@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:oelresnet@plymouth.ac.uk). Further specific examples of good practice can be found in this guidance in section 4.6 and document 2.4c '*Research supporting Outdoor Learning*'

